



On Tafwīd ¹ and Ta'wīl ²

Imām Jalāluddīn al-Suyūṭī

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Consign [the meaning] of the *abadīth* of attributes [to Allāh]
And do not liken them to the creation nor negate them
If all other pursuits have passed except embarking upon
The solving of this problem, only then search for an interpretation
Indeed the one who consigns [its meaning to Allāh] is saved
From the burden of the one who interprets figuratively ³

* * *

Among the unclear verses (*mutashābih*) are the verses of the attributes, and Ibn al-Lubbān has a book regarding this which is unique, for example:

“*al-Rahmānu ‘alāl arshi istawā*” ⁴, “*kullū shay’in hālikun illā wajhahū*” ⁵, “*wayabqā wajhū rabbika*” ⁶, “*wa-litusna’a ‘alā ‘aynī*” ⁷, “*yad Allāhi fawqa aydīyhim*” ⁸, “*limā khalaqtu bi-yadayya*” ⁹, “*Was-samāwātu matwiyyātun bi-yamīnihī*” ¹⁰

¹ Consigning the meaning of what is meant to the one who said it.

² Figurative interpretation.

³ Al-Hāfiz al-Suyūṭī as quoted by Imam Ibn al-Imād al-Hanbalī in *Shadharatudh Dhabab* online meshkat version, volume 8, page 17: <http://www.almeshkat.net/books/open.php?cat=13&book=733>

⁴ Surah Tāha: 5; the literal meaning of which would be: “The Beneficent One, Who is established on the Throne”

⁵ Surah al-Qasas: 88; the literal meaning of which would be: “Everything (that exists) will perish except His own Face”

⁶ Surah al-Rahmān: 27; the literal meaning of which would be: “But will abide (for ever) the Face of thy Lord”

⁷ Surah Tāha: 39; the literal meaning of which would be: “that thou mayest be reared under Mine eye”

⁸ Surah Al-Fath: 10; the literal meaning of which would be: “the Hand of Allāh is over their hands”

⁹ Surah Sād: 75; the literal meaning of which would be: “whom I created with My hands”

¹⁰ Surah Al-Zamar: 76; the literal meaning of which would be: “and the heavens will be rolled up in His right hand”

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... and the majority of the Ahlul Sunnah, which includes the *salaf*¹¹ and the people of Hadīth, have opined that such verses should be believed in but their meanings should be consigned to Allah, and we do not interpret them in such a way that negates their reality.

And a group from amongst the Ahlul Sunnah holds the position that it should be figuratively interpreted according to what befits His Majesty Most High and this is the *madhhab* of the *khulaf*^{12, 13}



¹¹ He means the majority of the first three generations of Muslims

¹² He means the majority of the latter generations of Muslims

¹³ Shaykh al-Karmī quoting al-Hāfiz al-Suyūtī from his book *Al-Itqān fī Ulūm al-Qurʾān* <http://www.al-eman.com/Islamlib/viewchp.asp?BID=156&CID=17#s4> in *Aqawil al-Thiqāt*